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Criteria and suggestions for the development and selection of instructional materials for culturally disadvantaged youth are discussed from the point of view of the textbook publisher. Materials should be educationally valid (any subject can be taught intellectually and honestly to a child), should teach fundamental concepts, and should suggest new teaching techniques. Also, the typography and design of textbook should be visually appealing. (MR)

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Instructional Resources for Disadvantaged Youth

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Why is there concern about the culturally disadvantaged or urban minorities or whatever you want to call them? I would like to quote Commissioner Keppel (to help clear up this question) who said, "Of all the pressures we now feel which tend to evoke our defenses - there are many pressures - the most acute is the Civil Rights Movement. I know it is not easy for the Superintendent on the firing line to maintain his balance and perspective in dealing with the difficulties of desegregation. The pressures now generated are enormous and emotions are high, but in spite of all the present difficulties, I say "Thank God for the Civil Rights Movement! It provides the very opportunity we have been looking for." There is a direct parallel in the concern of educators today and the Civil Rights movement and unless you can face up to it, I have a feeling that you're whistling in the dark.

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Early in 1963 which probably was quite late, the Superintendents of the Great Cities Schools adopted a philosophy for textbooks entitled "Policies and Procedures for Selection of Textbooks in Great Cities," which says in part, "The committee emphasized that most textbook orientation appears to be toward the middle class, white Anglo Saxon Protestant. The school population, especially in Great Cities, represents a much more heterogenous group than middle class whites. To be realistic textbooks should reflect the total range of American life. Textbooks used in large cities need to focus upon urban as well as suburban or rural life. The committee suggests the need for textbook revision to represent the special conditions inherent in life as it is now lived in Great Cities by many minority peoples." This statement goes on to give some guidelines for the kind of materials that the Superintendent of the Great Cities are suggesting they want to see in all of the texts to be used in their schools.

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The publishers answer to this -- was fairly long in coming. But as of recently as a 1964 conference, William E. Spaulding, President of the American Book Publishing Council said in abbreviated form "we are recognizing the need for an effective marshaling of our public resources in the war on poverty which must be won with basic education as the principle weapon of attack. It is already clear that we shall need to devise and produce new and effective learning materials in teaching and reading, at least if not in other basic subjects. It is not enough to teach illiterates to read, we must see to it that the new reader has a rich opportunity to make use of his newly acquired skill. He must find a challenge, excitement and genuine reward in his reading or he will never really become a reader." So, publishers are aware of the demands as indicated by the Great Cities. I attempted to find out just what was the extent to which the publishers of the publishing industry have complied.

Now, as I, said this response is in answer to a letter I wrote to the major publishers of text and non-text material, 63% of all the publishers addressed answered, that is 49 out of 78. Before you jump to a conclusion that we just got barely over 50% (which is good if you send a questionnaire anyway) a great many of the publishers to whom this letter was sent, quite frankly were not in the business of publishing school books. Many of them published just college or scientific books for example, and the fact that they did not answer may not be indicative of the fact that they were just being nasty, or didn't particularly care to be involved in this area. If allowed to assume that the 63% who answered make up a 100% of the majority of those who are involved in school textbook publishing, I think we can proceed.

It is, I think indicative of the times to see those publishers who plan specific materials for the culturally disadvantaged. There are a number, roughly 14 or 28% of all those answering planned material specifically for this group. (and I think this is vitally important) 16.3% or 8 companies say they already have materials specifically designed for culturally disadvantaged youth. Let me say, instantly, I quarrel with what some companies have specifically designed and I'll get into that a little later. In addition, a large number of companies have materials which they say are adaptable or can be used (they did not say with how much success) with the culturally disadvantaged. Nowadays people are beginning to lump the culturally disadvantaged and the functionally illiterate together. I suppose this is perfectly all right, because let's see, a functional illiterate is somebody who still can not read and was culturally disadvantaged until he was sixteen. I think that's about right. We're still talking about the same group of people although the legislation doesn't quite work that way. Publishers are also developing new materials for this group of people.

Now, quite frankly, let's examine for whom all of this material is intended. What kind of animal is this culturally disadvantaged child? Let me do it another and a very negative way. Let me mull over with you some of my thoughts about what the culturally disadvantaged child is not.

The culturally disadvantaged child is not a Negro. To be sure a great many culturally disadvantaged children happen to be Negroes, but to assume ipso facto that a Negro child coming to you, the teacher, is culturally disadvantaged is to do that child a great educational injury. You can not assume that there is a direct relationship; that this child is a Negro, therefore, he is culturally disadvantaged. Even if he is from the slums, this child may be tremendously socially mobile. Nor is he of any other racial or minority group. I cannot hit on this too hard because of what I find time and time again when I write publishers. I specifically refer to children called culturally disadvantaged. A lot of them reply "Oh yes, we have a lot of books that we're putting in colored people." When I ask "Are they culturally disadvantaged?", the answer, too often, is "YES".

Secondly, the culturally disadvantaged child is not a slow learner, nor is he stupid. He's so smart he's out of school frequently. That's not stupid. It is true that a great many of the teaching techniques we use are not applicable. He is not interested in the ritual that goes on in the school. But he is not a slow learner and people who are developing materials with a "slow learner kind of philosophy" for the culturally disadvantaged I feel are also doing them an injustice. He is not necessarily a juvenile delinquent, nor is he the wealthy

kid whose parents have gone to Bermuda and left him to play with nothing but TV sets and money. We're not talking about those kinds of kids, and the material basically, that publishers are developing now is not aimed at them.

Well who are the culturally disadvantaged? This is a good question, I'm not even sure that I can answer it. I would only suggest to you that first of all he's different. If a child who is different comes to you, do you necessarily assume that he is culturally disadvantaged? If a child comes to you and he speaks only French, do you assume then that this child is culturally disadvantaged? He can't understand you. He comes from a totally different culture. Do you assume that he is kind of stupid; that he needs to be babied along? For some reason or the other we perhaps assume that this child is extremely sophisticated because he speaks French. He doesn't understand English. On the other hand you have a child who comes to you, and you say "Why don't you have your lesson?" and he says "I don't dig it baby." You say this child is culturally disadvantaged. Well, is he disadvantaged? He's just different. His language patterns are different, his values are quite different. His motivations are different. His attitudes are different and his experiences are different. Perhaps his experiences are only urban. This is then what I think comprizes the disadvantaged child or at least that is part of the things. Above all, he is still a human being.

Now, I would like to examine with you some criteria for development or selection of material suitable for the culturally disadvantaged. I choose these criteria not because I'm in agreement with them by the way. This is the 1962, Board of Education-New York City policy statement about textbooks. The evaluative criterion that committees will use in reviewing textbooks:

1. How adequate is the space and treatment given to the roles of various minority groups in our culture?

2. Do the illustrations (both photographs and sketches) reflect the pluralistic nature of our society?

3. Does the treatment reflect the findings of recent historical scholarship?

4. Does the treatment avoid reality by glossing over the present day tensions of inter-group relations and the efforts made to relieve these tensions?

5. Does the presentation help to promote the goal of pluralistic society, free from the social ills of discrimination and prejudice in such areas as education, employment and housing?

Now I suppose if one was to adopt textbooks on the basis of these criteria it would be fine. But the first thing I immediately ask is, "Are you talking only about social studies? What about math? What about chemistry or physical science? Are you assuming that this criteria is only valid for social studies, is that what you're talking about? Because then you can put in some kinds of color on the pictures and change them around. One kind of color for one market and one kind of color for another.

I think this criteria is almost totally invalid. Let me discard it. Let me give you another one:

1. The pre-primer should include fewer pages than most pre-primers on the market in order to afford immediate rewards to children who come from homes where their experiences of rewards are slight. I would agree, a great many of these children come from homes where the reward experience is slight. However, I quarrel with the assumption that if you make the book a little bit shorter, the child is going to get the reward from this book that he hasn't gotten at home. Or that the reward will be meaningful at all or even necessarily that the book needs to be shorter.

Characters

2. The characters in the story should represent different races because we live in an inter-racial society. Well I don't know, I've been to Grosse Point, Michigan and that's not much of an inter-racial society and the kids go to school there and they grow up there. Do they mean a total society? All right. But you can't do it by sticking people in pictures in books sometimes, that's not the way it's done. Why?

Illustrations

3. Illustrations should be easy to interpret. They should have an initial allure and a definite center of interest.

4. Every story should have an exciting climax in order to make reading a pleasurable experience. Do you teachers honestly believe that reading is always a pleasurable experience? If you try to make that for children, they'll know you're fooling them. You simply can not do it.

I don't mean to lampoon all of the suggestions by well-intentioned people. First of all, some transitional material is going to be necessary. If a child cannot read at the 3rd grade level, then no matter what, you have to give him material he can read. The question you should answer is "How much of this material is necessary?" I would hope, not very much because if you as educators do a job of educating these children perhaps there won't be a need for special material or at least the need will be greatly decreased.

I think Dr. Sam Sheppard in St. Louis has shown that with existing material, and merely by motivating children by a variety of unique techniques of motivation, he has basically gotten his district (Banneker) up to the national reading norms. Now, if that man can do it and the dent is almost his own personality then surely teachers can do the same thing and with special kinds of transitional material within a very short time. If so, before too long we won't need what I call transitional material.

I would like now to turn to the question of what criteria can we apply when we evaluate instructional materials? Any material developed must first be educationally valid. By this I mean that the book, film, recording must delineate the underlying structure of intellectual discipline in a form the student can understand. I would agree with Mr. Brunner when he says "you can teach a child anything in some intellectually honest form." Now I am not saying you ought to teach a child everything. But I do agree that you can teach every child anything in some kind of intellectual, honest fashion.

Brunner says "The curriculum of a subject should be determined by the most fundamental understandings that can be achieved of the underlying principles that give structure to that subject." Teaching specific topics or skills without making clear their context in a broader fundamental structure of a field of knowledge is uneconomical in several deep senses. In the first place, teaching makes it exceedingly difficult for the student to generalize from what he has learned to what he will encounter later. In the second place, learning that has fallen short of a grasp of general principles has little reward in terms of intellectual excitement. The best way to create interest in a subject is to render it worth knowing, which means, to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which the learning has occurred. Third, knowledge one has acquired without sufficient structure to tie it together is knowledge that is likely to be forgotten." Brunner's emphasis upon structure I think, is especially applicable to curriculum materials. Again in order for material to be educationally valid it must reflect the basic organizing ideas of that field or that curriculum or that specific field of knowledge. In reading material for instance, there has been too much emphasis upon control vocabulary and reading level. If we know one thing for sure we know kids don't talk like we read it in the book.

We know now that a child approaching social studies already knows more about the world than just the community---the firehouse or the store on the corner. And furthermore he is interested in more than this. There is, I think, substantial evidence at this point to indicate that we have underestimated the intellectual potential of all students, not just the culturally disadvantaged. Brunner suggested that the foundation of any subject may be taught to anybody. Interest, purpose and intrinsic stimulation coming from examination and analysis of ideas may be more important than our carefully controlled reading levels and consequent sequences which often blunt the students desire to learn. Indeed the apparent disparity between educational research and current text material is fantastic. The result of which is that the opinions and prejudice of those who most often are furtherest removed from the classroom and the pupil decides what should be published or what should be included in material or if it is to be published at all. If I haven't already made it quite clear let me say again, I don't think that very much ought to be developed specifically for the culturally disadvantaged and everyone else is going to profit.

I would like to suggest a second quality for future instructional materials in terms of its characteristics. Instructional materials must be made into teaching vehicles in the sense that good teaching practices are built in so far that its practical into these materials so that teachers are forced into different instructional postures. We can already see for example many obvious physical changes in the format of many of the textbooks and other kinds of books and materials that you've already seen today.

The choice of type, page size, design, illustrations are being carefully thought out so that the textbook is attractive and visually appetizing. Maps, charts and other graphic devices are being more carefully integrated into social studies, math and science books. In the newer text illustrations take up to 40% of the space, since pictures visually translate concepts and verbal symbols. Here again let me emphasize, that as teachers you should use the pictures and other verbal symbols in the book. Don't say that there is a mpa on page 74 and skip over that and get to the lesson on the next page.

Printed matter is arranged for short, easy eye sweeps. Technical concepts in subject matter areas are slowly and sequentially developed and many opportunities for application are provided. Glossary aids for pronunciation and meaning are now beginning to appear. Various kinds of questions are beginning to be placed throughout text matter so that students can more easily note factual details, general conclusions, summaries and relationship to factual data.

The shift is away from the recall of factual data per se to the kind of educational material that is valid. It is valid for the educational fraternity per se for all children. We say that for the culturally disadvantaged urban child we need to develop stories that center around urban situations, that are interesting and that involve all kinds of people. I cannot say strongly enough that this is precisely the kind of reading material that we need for all children.

Now publishers, bless us, cannot develop everything that you people want. I i like to suggest that there are lots and lots of things to which you should not look for a publisher to produce. The school district ought to do it. A lot of the transitional material that is now being provided or is going to be sold by the publisher (some of it is attrocious) should not even be developed by a publisher. It should be produced by the school district or the teacher. You've got special needs that maybe you ought to meet. Dr. Sheppard's district is a segregated one (all the children are Negroes); there are things that he can do in this kind of situation that cannot be done here because the New York City schools are integrated.

I would like also from a publishers point of view to emphasize something that perhaps many of you are not aware of. There is in existence (already on the market) considerable material (I'm not going to judge that material as either good, bad or indifferent) But there is a lot of material already available. Teachers and administrators are saying the kind of material that they want in a textbook. Now I say to you quite frankly we as publishers are producing now the kind of material you say you want. By George, <u>buy</u> it, and then <u>use</u> it!

This is not only a problem of the culturally disadvantaged child, the problem also is (I said to you, perhaps you felt somewhat cryptically) that the functionally illiterate is somebody who is culturally disadvantaged until he became sixteen and left school and became unemployed. Well, there are according to the tabulations that I have here, roughly nineteen million, eight hundred twenty one thousand unemployed and non-employed who have had eight years of school or less. This does not include what we call the hidden uneducated individual who functions in a job and has had 8th or 9th or 10th grade and still can't read very well. There are 10.5 million people who are not in the labor force and therefore are kind of difficult to comprehend. If you want to look at a small segment of the population of a racial or an ethnic group - in 1960 there were 1.4 million Mexican-Americans and one out of every four of these people, fourteen years of age or over has had absolutely no schooling in the U.S. whatsoever. These people are illiterate in any language. Unemployment among these people was approximately 10%. In terms of our selective service estimates all young men turning eighteen in 1964, everyone of them was examined. One point four million would be rejected on educational grounds alone. This problem effects not only those of you who deal with children instantly, it effects those who are parents (those who are much older.)

Attending school and participating in a learning activity prepared by a school should make a difference if e as educators believe that learning effects behavior changes, (and I'm not so sure we believe that). Then the difference should be visible. That is, it should be visible (broadly speaking) in the behavior of a learner. Somehow or other the things that we teach him should make a difference and this difference should be visible or it should be measurable.

Only in the schools which attempt to insure equal educational opportunity for all youngsters irrespective of their varying attitudes, abilities, talents, disabilities, interests and cultural backgrounds, can we hope to achieve the democratic traditions and promise of truly universal education.